

Pum Opunvkv Pun Yvhiketv Pun Fulletv



Our Language
Our Songs
Our Ways

Note: This is a draft of a textbook. Some parts are still incomplete. We would be grateful for any comments. -Jack Martin, Margaret Mauldin, Gloria McCarty, 2003.

Acknowledgments / Mvtô!

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The Creek (Muskogee) language

Vocabulary

estōnkô how are you?

estōnkis os I'm fine

mvtô thank you

hēr's ci hello

ehe yes

mōnks, mōnko no

enkâ okay

hvö okay (in answer to a request)

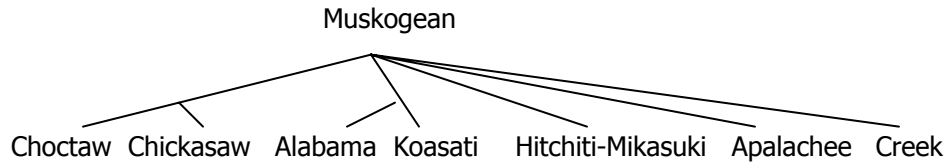
Creek (or Muskogee, Muscogee) is a living language spoken in Oklahoma and Florida. It was formerly spoken by a number of **etvlwv** or small tribes in what is now Alabama and Georgia. Some groups speaking Creek migrated to Florida in the 1700's, where they became known as Seminoles. In the 1830's, most Creeks and Seminoles were forced to move to Indian Territory. Today, Creek is spoken in three locations:

- the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma
- the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
- the Seminole Tribe of Florida

Historically, the capital of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation was Okmulgee (Creek **Ōkmulke**). The old tribal headquarters is now the Creek Council House Museum. The new tribal headquarters in Okmulgee was built in the 1970's. Wewoka (Creek **Ue-wohkv** or "barking water") is the capital of the Seminole Nation. Many place names (Tulsa, Tallahassee, Wetumka, Eufaula, Weleetka, Sasakwa, Konawa) in Oklahoma, Florida, Alabama, and Georgia are Creek.

Some people prefer the term 'Creek', and some prefer the term 'Muskogee'. The word in Creek is **Maskoke**. It has no other meaning. The term 'Creek' is slightly broader and is used here to include dialects spoken by Seminoles.

Creek belongs to a family of languages called Muskogean:



The Muskogean family once stretched from Louisiana to Georgia and is the most important language family in the South. Much of eastern Oklahoma (four of the Five Civilized Tribes) is Muskogean territory. The languages are very different from each other--a little more different than Spanish and French. Because of this, it's thought that the language ancestral to the modern languages was spoken about 3,000 years ago.

Missionaries began extensive work on Creek in Indian Territory in the 1800's. They taught students how to read and write, and with them developed a practical alphabet based in part on the English alphabet. Creek speakers published many laws and other materials before Oklahoma statehood.

When Oklahoma became a state, Creek ceased to have the same importance it once did. Creek and Seminole lands in Indian Territory were parceled out to non-Creeks, so that Creek speakers no longer formed a contiguous group. As a result, Creek is an endangered language today. Most people who speak Creek are grandparents or great-grandparents. Few children are learning the language in schools.

The language you are learning in this textbook is an ancient language. The opportunity you have to hear it and speak it is rare. We hope you have respect for the language and for those who wish to pass it on to others.

The alphabet

Vocabulary

cokv book, newspaper, paper,
letter

eshoccickv pen, pencil

vhvöke door

vhvökuce window

mvhayv teacher

cokv-hēcv student

cvhöcefkv my name

The Creek alphabet has been in use since 1853. We have added a few extra marks above and below vowels to help people learning the language. These are not used elsewhere.

a **ayö** hawk. Long as in *father*.
 ăkketv to bite. Short as in *box*. (Only found before *h* and *k*.)

c **cesse** mouse. As in *such*.

e **ēckö** roasted corn. Long as in *feed*.
 efv dog. Short as in *hit*.

f **fo** bee. As in *foot*.

h **halö** tin can. As in *heel*.

i **ehjwv** his wife. As in *hey*.
 Lētkis. I'm running. As in *beed*. (at the ends of sentences)

k **kapv** coat. As in *skin*.

l **lucv** turtle. As in *low*.

m **meskē** summer. As in *mouse*.

n **nerē** night. As *not*.

o **ofv** inside. Long as in *code*.
 öpv owl. Short as *hotel*.

p **penwv** turkey. As in *spin*.

- r** **rvrǒ** fish. Not found in English: Say **l**, but force air over tongue.
- s** **svm̥pv** basket. As in *sound*.
- t** **tvffǒ** grasshopper. As in *stop*.
- u** **sutv** sky. Short as in *put*.
- v** **yce** corn. Short as in *sofa*.
- w** **wakv** cow. As in *wait*.
- y** **yvn̥vsv** buffalo. As in *yet*.

Some vowels may be combined:

- ae** **Aeha!** an exclamation.
- ie** **iemetv** to hand to.
- vǒ** **vhvǒke** door.
- eu** **cēmeu** you, too.
- ue** **uewv** water.

For English speakers, the difficult letters to remember are **c**, **i**, **r**, and **v**.

Creek makes a distinction between short and long vowels. Long vowels are held longer. Listen carefully to the difference between the following:

Short	Long
v, ǎ	a
e	ē
u, ǒ	o
Ex. <u>f</u>ykv vine, <u>f</u>ǎkke soil	<u>f</u>akv hunting
<u>e</u>cke mother	<u>ē</u>ckǒ roasted corn
<u>c</u>ukǒ house, <u>c</u>ǒkwv mouth	<u>c</u>okv book

The short vowels **ǎ** and **ǒ** are variants of **v** and **u**. They have a little more of the quality of **a** and **o**, but are short. Outside this course, some people spell them with **v** and **u**, and some people spell them with **a** and **o**.

Vowels and diphthongs are sometimes nasal. These are written **ạ, ọ, ụ, ẹ̄, ṿ**, etc.

Creek has tone: **nake** thing vs. **nâke** what.

Consonants can be doubled, and then are held longer:

etö tree
hvce tail

cettö snake
hvcce stream

Exercises

1 Have your **mvhayv** say the following words several times and try to hear whether she's saying the (a) word, the (b) word, or the (c) word:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| a läksv hoof | b laksv liar | |
| a fvkv vine | b fakv hunting | |
| a hvce tail | b hvcce river | c hacē drunk |
| a ele his/her foot | b elē dead | |
| a ehe her husband | b ehẹ yes | |
| a nake thing | b nâke what | |
| a hēces he's looking at it | b hêces he sees it | |

Pair up and practice saying each until your partner can tell which you're saying.

2 **V** or **a**? Listen to the following words as they are read and try to figure out whether the sound is a **v** (short) or **a** (held long):

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a t__ffo grasshopper | h __t__me car |
| b k__fe coffee | i __yo hawk |
| c luc__ turtle | j y__n__s__ buffalo |
| d cvpuc__ my grandfather | k s__t__ apple |
| e k__pv coat | l p__k__n__ peach |
| f w__kv cow | m h__lp__t__ alligator |
| g ef__ dog | |

3 **E** or **ē**? Do the same for **e** (short) and **ē** (held long):

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| a __cö deer | c __kvnv land |
| b f__ke heart | d __kv his/her head |

- e **__wvnwv** his/her sister
- f **wakv-p__s__** milk
- g **vp__ssē** fat
- h **m__sk__** summer

4 Use the right diphthong:

- a **hǒp__wv** child
- b **vh__kuce** window
- c **l__kē** deep

More on the alphabet

Vocabulary

herē good
here-mahē very good
hvse-eskērkv clock
mvhakv-cukō school

pōkkō ball
ōhliketv chair
hiyōwat now
Cehecarēs I'll see you

In the nineteenth century, the Creek First Reader introduced the alphabet by combining letters into two- and three-letter syllables. We use the same method here:

Two-letter syllables:

ca	ce	ci	co	cu	cv
fa	fe	fi	fo	fu	fv
ha	he	hi	ho	hu	hv
ka	ke	ki	ko	ku	kv
la	le	li	lo	lu	lv
ma	me	mi	mo	mu	mv
na	ne	ni	no	nu	nv
pa	pe	pi	po	pu	pv
ra	re	ri	ro	ru	rv
sa	se	si	so	su	sv
ta	te	ti	to	tu	tv
wa	we	wi	wo	wu	wv
ya	ye	yi	yo	yu	yv

af	ef	if	of	uf	vf
ak	ek	ik	ok	uk	vk
al	el	il	ol	ul	vl
am	em	im	om	um	vm
an	en	in	on	un	vn
ap	ep	ip	op	up	vp
as	es	is	os	us	vs
at	et	it	ot	ut	vt

Three-letter syllables:

sak	sek	sik	sok	suk	svk
lak	lek	lik	lok	luk	lvk
mas	mes	mis	mos	mus	mvs
mat	met	mit	mot	mut	mvt
hak	hek	hik	hok	huk	hvk
has	hes	his	hos	hus	hvs
mak	mek	mik	mok	muk	mvk
man	men	min	mon	mun	mvn
hal	hel	hil	hol	hul	hvl
nak	nek	nik	nok	nuk	nvk
fas	fes	fis	fos	fus	fvs
cas	ces	cis	cos	cus	cvs
spa	spe	spi	spo	spu	spv
sla	sle	sli	slo	slu	slv
yek	yes	yet	yec	yun	yvn
yok	cem	fen	kut	mah	con
hon	pun	lof	yat	kat	res
ska	hvl	hvt	hom	cet	lof
wol	wik	sap	net	pel	cak
wak	ket	fvt	yen	sko	poh
rak	ken	pok	lvf	hop	tat
cef	cof	rah	mvt	cuf	cvf

Four- and five-letter syllables:




wvnh cvmh kvnks




Exercises




- 1 Real language: Try reading the following:

Es·tǝn·kô!
Hǝm·pǎks cē!
Mv·tô!
Es·te mas·ko·ke em pu·nv·kv kēr·ri·yēs.

- 2 Try reading the following illustrations from the Creek First Reader:

<p><i>Cuko.</i></p>  <p>CUKO.</p>	<p><i>Efv.</i></p>  <p>EFV.</p>	<p><i>Eco.</i></p>  <p>ECO.</p>
--	--	--

<p><i>Fuco.</i></p>  <p>FUOO.</p>	<p><i>Pvlvknv.</i></p>  <p>PVLVKNV.</p>	<p><i>Enke.</i></p>  <p>ENKE.</p>
--	--	--

<p><i>Es Cvpa yechv.</i></p>  <p>ES CVPA YECKV.</p>	<p><i>Es cvllv.</i></p>  <p>ES CVLLV.</p>	<p><i>Oh liketv.</i></p>  <p>OH LIKETV.</p>
--	--	--

Heyv eshoccickvt ôs 'This is a book', Eshoccickvt ôwv? 'Is that a book?'

Vocabulary

heyv, yv this
mv that
vnhesse my friend
'skotkv scissors

hõvnwv male, man
hõktē female, woman
põkkēccv ball player

The words **heyv** and **mv** mean 'this' and 'that'. In 'be' sentences ('be', 'am', 'is', 'are'), the word meaning 'be' comes at the end. A **-t** can appear on both noun phrases, but the first is often dropped:

<u>Noun phrase (-t)</u>	<u>Noun phrase -t</u>	<u>ôs</u>
Heyv(t) this-T 'This is a book.'	cokvt book-T	ôs. is
Mv(t) that-T 'That is a pen.'	eshoccickvt pen-T	ôs. is

When you use **-t** and say **Heyvt cokvt ôs**, it means 'This is a book (as opposed to everything else)'.

Questions end in **-v**:

Heyv cokvt ôs. This is a book.
Heyv cokvt ôwv? Is this a book?

Mv eshoccickvt ôs. That is a pen.
Mv eshoccickvt ôwv? Is that a pen?

Pronouns ('it', 'he', etc.) can be left out in Creek: the following are complete sentences:

Cokvt ôwv?	Is [it] a book?
Ehe, cokvt ôs.	Yes, [it] is a book.

Ōh-ŏnvkv (reading)

Heyv hvse-eskērvkt ôs.
Pökköt ôvv?
Möns, hvse-eskērvkt ôs.



Heyv vnheset ôs. Höktēt ôs.
Heyv höktē vnheset ôs.
Hövnwvt ôvv?
Möns, höktēt ôs.



Exercises

1 Introduce yourself and someone else along the following lines:

Mary cvhöcefvkt ôs.
Yv vnheset ôs.
Cokv-hēcvkt ôs.
Hövnwvt ôs.

My name is Mary.
This is my friend.
[He/She] is a student.
[He] is a man.

2 Answer with *ehē*:

Ex. Cokvt ôvv?

Ehē, cokvt ôs.

Mv höktēt ôvv?
Mv vnheset ôvv?
Mv hövnwvt ôvv?
Vnhesse pökkēccvt ôvv?
Mary höktēt ôvv?

Give the question corresponding to the answer:

Ex. Eshoccickvt ôvv?

Ehē, eshoccickvt ôs.
Ehē, cokvt ôs.
Ehē, mvhayvt ôs.
Ehē, pökköt ôs.
Ehē, höktēt ôs.

Heyv nâket ôwv? 'What's this?'

Vocabulary

efv dog
pose cat
fucǔ duck
răkkǔ horse
wakv cow
cǔwatv goat

penwv turkey
sǔkhv hog
tǔlǔse chicken
sâsăkwv goose
yvpelikv sheep
vpuekv tame animal

'What' in Creek is **nâke**. In 'what' questions and other questions requiring a long answer, the sentence ends in **-a**:

Heyv eshoccickvt ôs.
Heyv nâket ôwa?
Eshoccickvt ôs.

This is a pen.
What is this?
It's a pen.

Mv cokvt ôs.
Mv nâket ôwa?
Cokvt ôs.

That is a book.
What is that?
It's a book.

Notice that the question word doesn't move in Creek.

There's a short way to say **ôwv** and **ôwa**: just use **te** and **tē**, respectively:

Heyv eshoccickvt ôwv?
Hey eshoccickv te?

Is this a pen? (long way)
Is this a pen? (short way)

Heyv nâket ôwa?
Heyv nâke tē?

What is this? (long way)
What's this? (short way)

Another small word **tv** is very useful:

Heyv tv?
Mv tv?

What about this?
What about that?

Ŏh-ŏnvkv



Heyv nâket ôwa? Wakvt ôwv?
Ehe, wakvt ôs.

Vpuekvt ôwv?
Ehe, vpuekvt ôs.

Heyv nâket ôwa? Wakvt ôwv?
Mõnks, hõnvnwvt ôs.



Heyv tv? Nâke tē?
Tõlôset ôs.
Ehe, tõlôset ôs. Heyv tõlôse vpuekvt ôwv?
Ehe, vpuekvt ôs.
Heyv vnheset ôwv? Mõnks, tõlôset ôs!
Heyv tõlôse hõnvnwvt ôwv? Ehe, hõnvnwvt ôs.

Exercises

- 1 Which is bigger/biggest?

a	efv	b	föcö	c	räkkö
a	yvpefikv	b	penwv	c	pose
a	wakv	b	cöwatv	c	sâsäkwv
a	tõlôse	b	räkkö	c	pose
- 2 List all the **fuswv** (birds):
- 3 List the animals you get **wakv-pesē** (milk) from:
- 4 List the animals you wouldn't eat:

Heyv cokv catēt ôs 'This book is red', Mv cokv hvtkēt ôwv?
'Is that book white?'

Vocabulary

catē red
hōlattē blue
lanē green, yellow, brown

hvtkē white
lvstē black

Heyv 'this' and **mv** 'that' can be used with nouns:

heyv cokv this book
mv cokv that book

Sentences like 'This book is red' follow the pattern below:

<u>Noun phrase (-t)</u>	<u>Adjective -t</u>	<u>ôs</u>
Heyv cokv(t)	catēt	ôs.
this book-T	red-T	is
'This book is red.'		

Mv eshoccickv(t) lvstēt	ôwv?
that pen-T	black-T
'Is that pen black?'	is?

Notice that adjectives end in **-ē** in Creek. You can use **te** here, too:

Mv eshoccickv lvstēt ôwv?	Is that pen black? (long way)
Mv eshoccickv lvstē te?	Is that pen black? (short way)

Ōh-ōnvkv



Heyv răkkō lvstēt ôs. Catē te?
Mōnks, lvstēt ôs.
Heyv răkkōt vnheset ôs.

Heyv tv? Lvstēt ôwv?
Mōnks, hvtkēt ôs. Yv penwv hvtkēt ôs.



Exercises

- 1 Which color describes plants?
- 2 Which colors are opposites?
- 3 Answer the questions in Creek:

a Heyv nâke te?

b Heyv vpuekv hvtkē te?

c Hōlattēt ôwv?



4 Answer the **vpōhkv** (question):

a Heyv nâket ôwa?

b Vpuekvt ôwv?

c Hvtkē te?



Mv cokv lvstē 'that black book'

Vocabulary

rākkē big, large
cutkē, cutkusē small, little
mōcvšē new
leskē old (of a thing)
cvmpē sweet

hōmē bitter
hiyē hot
kvsvppē cold
fvmpē stinky

An adjective can be used within a noun phrase to modify a noun:

mv cokv lvstē that black book
heyv efv cutkē this small dog

Notice the placement of the adjective. These noun phrases can then be used in sentences:

Yv(t)
this-T
'Is this a black pen?'

eshoccickv lvstēt **ôwv?**
pen black-T is?

Mv eshoccickv lvstē(t)
that pen black-T
'Is that black pen big?'

rākkēt **ôwv?**
big-T is?

Be careful not to confuse sentences like **Yv(t) eshoccickv lvstēt ôs** 'This is a black pen' and **Yv eshoccickv(t) lvstēt ôs** 'This pen is black'. The first identifies something as a black pen; the second identifies a pen as black. Often there is a pause after the subject.

Ōh-ōnvkv

Heyv vnhesse mōcvšēt ôs.
Nāket ôwv?
Efvt ôs!
Rākkē te? Mōnks, cutkēt ôs.
Efvt cutkēt ôs.



Heyv tv? Vnhesset ôwv?
Mōnks. Wakvt ôs.
Yv wakv fvmpēt ôs!

Exercises

1 Connect the opposites!

rākkē
lvstē
kvsvppē
leskē
cvmpē
hōktē
mvhayv
yv

hōmē
hōnvnwv
cokv-hēc
mv
hvtkē
cutkē
hiyē
mucvsē

2 Add an adjective to modify the noun:

Ex. mv pose mv pose cutkē

a yv cokv

b mv eshoccickv

c vnhesse

d wkv

3 Combine the two questions into one:

Ex. Cokvt ôwv? Lvstēt ôwv? Cokv lvstēt ôwv?

a Poset ôwv? Cutkēt ôwv?

b Eshoccickvt ôwv? Catēt ôwv?

c Efvt ôwv? Lanēt ôwv?

d Sǫkhvt ôwv? Rǎkkēt ôwv?

Răkke-mahē 'very big'

Vocabulary

mvnettē young
vculē old (usually of a male)
hōktvlē old (of a female)
mahē tall

kōcōknē short
sulkē many, a lot, much
nvcōmē, nvcōwē few, not many,
not much

Degree can be shown in adjectives by adding **-mahē** 'very':

vculē old (of a male)	vcule-mahē very old
herē good	here-mahē very good
cvmpe sweet	cvmpe-mahē very sweet

Notice that the vowel at the end of the adjective is short here (**-e**).

Another way to indicate degree is with **ōrēn** 'really, a lot':

Yv cokv leske-mahēt ôs.	This book is very old.
Yv cokv ōrēn leskēt ôs.	This book is really old.

Exercises

1 Change one part each time to form a new sentence:

a	Yv	cokvt	ôs.
b	_____	_____	_____
c	_____	_____	_____
d	_____	_____	_____
e	_____	_____	_____

2 Express yourself! Use **-mahē** 'very':

Ex. Yv sōkhv răkkēt ôs. Yv sōkhv răkke-mahēt ôs.

a	Yv eshoccickv leskēt ôs.	_____
b	Vnhesse kōcōknēt ôs.	_____
c	Yv mvhayv mvnettē te?	_____
d	Yv ōhliketv cutkēt ôs.	_____
e	Yv cokv leskēt ôs.	_____
b	Mv cokv catēt leskēt ôs.	_____

Cokv-hēcvt ôwis 'I am a student', Mvhayvt ōntskv? Are you a teacher?

Vocabulary

vne I
cēme you
ēme he/she
pome we
este person
este-cate Indian
este-lane Asian

este-hvtke white person
este-lvste black person
este-Maskoke Muskogee, Creek
este-Semvnole Seminole
ōmvlkv all, everything
este-ōmvlkv everyone

The pronouns in Creek are:

vne 'I'
cēme 'you'
ēme 'he/she'
pome 'we'

Pronouns are not used much in Creek because verbs include person markers. Pronouns sometimes contract: the expression **Cēme tv?** 'How about you?' is usually shortened to **Centv?**. Instead of **ēme** 'he/she', the word **mv** 'that' is often used.

Here are the different persons for 'be':

ôwis I am
ōntskes (ôwetskes) you are
ôs (ôwes) he/she/it is
ôwēs we are
ôwatskes y'all are

Here are some examples:

Mvhayvt ôwis. I am a teacher.
Cokv-hēcvt ôwēs. We are students.
Este-Maskoket ôwis. I am Muskogee.

(Note: usually the same form of the noun is used for singular and plural.)

Here are the question forms of 'be':

ôwiyv? am I?
öntskv? are you?
ôwv? is he/she/it?
ôweyv? are we?
ôwatskv? are y'all?

Exercises

1 Take turns reciting the pronouns and different forms of 'be' in class.

2 Change the sentence so that it fits the pronoun in parentheses:

Ex. Mvhayvt ôwis. (ēme) Mvhayvt ôs.

a Cokv-hēcv̄t ôwēs. (cēme) _____

b Este-Semvnolet ôwis. (pome) _____

3 Answer the questions with *eh̄e*:

a Mvhayvt öntskv? _____

b Pokkēc̄cv̄t öntskv? _____

Heyv cokv tokot ôs 'This is not a book'

Vocabulary

atvme car
perrö boat
perrö-tvmkv airplane
escunēckv truck
nene road
cukö house
kvtöpökv, kvpötökv hat, cap

hönnv dress
hvtekpikv pants
kapv coat
'stelepikv shoe(s)
nake thing
nak-ömvikv everything

To say 'not' with a noun, **toko** is used:

cokv book	
Yv cokvt ôs.	This is a book.
Yv cokv tokot ôs.	This is not a book.
Yv cokv tokot ôwv?	Isn't this a book?

Here are the different persons for **toko**:

Mvhayv tokot ôwis.	I am not a teacher.
Mvhayv tokot ôwetskes.	You are not a teacher.
Mvhayv tokot ôs.	He/She is not a teacher.
Mvhayv tokot ôwēs.	We are not teachers.
Mvhayv tokot ôwatskes.	Y'all are not teachers.

To say 'also', a suffix **-u** is added to a noun phrase (or **-ö** after **v**):

vne I, me	vneu me, too
cēme you	cēmeu you, too
mv efv that dog	mv efvö that dog, too

When **-u** is added to a noun phrase, **-t** is never used with it.

Öh-önvkv



Estönkô!
Sammy cvhocefkvt ôs.
Mvhayvt ôwis.

Yv vnhesset ôs.
 Vnhesseu mvhayvt ôs.
 Cokv-hěcv tokot ôs.
 Pökkěccvt ôs.
 Vneu pökkěccvt ôwis.



Centv? Cěmeu mvhayvt ōntskv?
 Cěmeu pökkěccvt ōntskv?
 Este-Maskoket ōntskv?

Exercises

1 Practice the pattern *Yv cokv tokot ôs* by replacing *cokv* with the following noun phrases:

- a (atvme) _____
- b (perrō-tvmkv) _____
- c (efv lvstē) _____
- d (mv atvme leskē) _____

2 Use four sentences to describe what you are not:

Ex. Mvhayv tokot ôwis.

- a _____
- b _____
- c _____
- d _____

3 Try to get the rest of the class to identify a particular object in the room by stating what it is not. (For example: *Yv cokv tokot ôs. Ōhliketvō tokot ôs. Eshoccickvō tokot ôs.*)

4 Use *-u* 'also' with the pronoun in parentheses to form a sentence:

Ex. Cokv-hěcv ōwis. (vne) Vneu cokv-hěcv ōwis.

- a Cokv-hěcv ōntskv? (cěme) _____
- b Mvhayv ōwis. (vne) _____
- c Mvhayv ōntskv? (cěme) _____
- d Pökkěccvt ōwis. (vne) _____
- e Pökkěccvt ōntskv? (cěme) _____

Vm efv 'my dog', cvcke 'my mother': Possession

Vocabulary

ecke his/her mother
erke his/her father
epuse his/her grandmother
epuca his/her grandfather
esăkp his/her arm
enke his/her hand

ekv his/her head
ecăkw his/her mouth
efēke his/her heart
ele his/her leg, foot
môwis but

There are two ways to say 'my' in Creek:

vm efv my dog
vm atvme my car
vm pose my cat

cvcke my mother
cvsăkp my arm
cvpuse my grandmother

For parts of the body and family terms (i.e., nouns indicating relationship), **cv-** is used. For other types of nouns (mostly things that can be transferred), **vm** is used. Here are the complete sets of prefixes:

vm my
cem your
em his/her/its/their
pum our

cv- my
ce- your
e- his/her/its/their
pu- our

Examples:

vm efv my dog
cem efv your dog
em efv his/her/their dog
pum efv our dog

cvcke my mother
cecke your mother
ecke his/her/their mother
pucke our mother

A sound change affects the **vm** set: final **m** is used before vowels and consonants made by closing the lips (**p, m**); forms ending in **n** are used before all other consonants:

vn cukă my house
cen cukă your house
en cukă his/her house
pun cukă our house

A possessor may be a full noun phrase. In this case, a form of **em** is used:

Bill em efv Bill's dog
Mary en cukõ Mary's house
cvcke em atvme my mother's car

Õh-õnvkv



Justin cvhöcefkvt ôs.
Cokv-hēcvt ôwis.
Yv vm efvt ôs.
Vm efv lanēt ôs.

Yv vnheset ôs.
Jenny ehöcefkvt ôs.
Em efv hvtkēt ôs.
Vnhesse em efv räkkēt ôs.



Yv cvrke em atvmet ôs.
Em atvme cutkusēt ôs.
Môwis, möcvsēt ôs.

Yv cvpuse em atvmet ôs.
Cvpuse em atvme leske-mahēt ôs.
Môwis, räkkēt ôs.



Heyv vm atvmet ôs!
Cem atvme tv?
Leskē te? Möcvsē te?

Exercises

1 Give the possessed form corresponding to the noun phrase in parentheses:

Ex.	efv (vne)	vm efv
a	erke (cēme)	_____
b	pose (ēme)	_____
c	ekv (vne)	_____
d	enke (cēme)	_____
e	atvme (pome)	_____
f	cokv (cēme)	_____

g	kvťpřkv (vne)	_____
h	hvtēpikv (Bill)	_____
i	cokv (vm mvhayv)	_____

Likepvs 'Have a seat': Commands

Vocabulary

letketv to run
tasketv to jump
yvhiketv to sing
liketv to sit down
hueretv to stand up
wăkketv to lie down

(ö)pvetv to dance
hōmpetv to eat
esketv to drink
mēkkō chief, king
hōpuewv child
tvstvnvke warrior

Just as adjectives have been listed with final **-ē**, verbs are listed in Vocabulary sections with final **-etv**. To use a verb in a sentence, you usually need to find the stem (the part before **-etv**). Simple commands are formed by adding **-vs** to the verb stem:

letketv to run

stem: **letk-**

letketv to run
tasketv to jump
yvhiketv to sing

Letkvs! Run!
Taskvs! Jump!
Yvhikvs! Sing!

Commands may be made more polite by adding **-ep-**:

letketv to run
liketv to sit
nōcetv to sleep

Letkepvs. Please run.
Likepvs. Have a seat.
Nōcepvs! Please go to sleep.

The ending **-vs** is one of several endings you'll see with Creek verbs:

yvhiketv to sing

stem: **yvhik-**

Yvhikvs! Sing!
Yvhikes. He/She is singing.
Yvhikv? Is he/she singing?

Here, **-vs** indicates a command, **-es** indicates a statement, and **-v** indicates a question.

Exercises

Expressing aspect: Grades

Vocabulary

nōcetv to sleep
wvnyetv to tie
vyetv to go
ākketv to bite
fēketv to pay

tvmketv to fly
erkenkv preacher
tōpv bed
svmpv basket
uewv water

Grades are changes in the shape of a verb. Grades indicate aspect (whether an action is ongoing, completed, repeated, etc.). There are four grades in Creek:

wvnyetv to tie

stem: **wvny-**

zero grade

lengthened grade (l-grade)

falling tone grade (f-grade)

nasalizing grade (n-grade)

aspirating grade (h-grade)

wvnyvs tie it!

wvnayes he/she is tying it

wvnāyes he/she has tied it

wvnayes he/she keeps tying it

wvnāhyes he/she tied it (today)

Grades apply to the stem. The stem is the part before **-etv**:

wvnyetv to tie

stem: **wvny-**

vyetv to go

stem: **vy-**

letketv to run

stem: **letk-**

Exercises

Progressive aspect: The L-grade

Vocabulary

wohketv to bark
hvlketv to crawl
vfvnketv to kiss
vtōtketv to work
vtetv to come

yvkvpstv to walk
ēhketv to hide (oneself)
vcemketv to climb
fayetv to hunt

The lengthened grade (l-grade) is the most common grade in Creek. It's used for any action in progress ('is walking', 'is working', etc.), whether in the present ('is walking'), past ('was walking'), or future ('will be walking').

As its name suggests, the l-grade is formed by lengthening the last vowel of a stem. The short vowels on the left shift to the long forms on the right:

v, ă	→	a
e	→	ē
u, ō	→	o

Here are some examples:

vyetv to go
ăkketv to bite
letketv to run
nōcetv to sleep

ayes he/she is going
akkes he/she is biting
lētkes he/she is running
noces he/she is sleeping

When the last syllable is already long or a diphthong, it doesn't get any longer. This means that **a**, **ē**, **o**, **i**, and **ue** remain unchanged:

tasketv to jump
fēketv to pay
wohketv to bark
liketv to sit down
hueretv to stand up

taskes he/she is jumping
fēkes he/she is paying
wohkes he/she is barking
likes he/she is sitting down
hueres he/she is standing up

The L-M-N rule. A vowel + **l**, **m**, or **n** acts like a diphthong. If the stem ends in **VIC**, **VmC**, or **VnC** (where V and C stand for any vowel or consonant) no lengthening applies:

hvlketv to crawl
hõmpetv to eat
vfvnketv to kiss

hvlkes he/she is crawling
hõmpes he/she is eating
vfvnkes he/she is kissing him/her

Exercises

1 Complete the following:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ex. | vyetv to go | stem: <u>vy-</u> |
| | he/she is going | lgr.: <u>ay-</u>
<u>ayes</u> |
| a | vtõtketv to work | stem: _____ |
| | he/she is working | lgr.: _____
_____ |
| b | esketv to drink | stem: _____ |
| | he/she is drinking | lgr.: _____
_____ |
| c | wăkketv to lie down | stem: _____ |
| | he/she is lying down | lgr.: _____
_____ |
| d | fayetv to hunt | stem: _____ |
| | he/she is hunting | lgr.: _____
_____ |
| e | vretv to go about | stem: _____ |
| | he/she is going about | lgr.: _____
_____ |
| f | vcemketv to climb | stem: _____ |
| | he/she is climbing | lgr.: _____
_____ |
| g | ēhketv to hide | stem: _____ |
| | he/she is hiding | lgr.: _____
_____ |

h	tvmketv to fly	stem: _____
	he/she is flying	lgr.: _____

i	vtetv to come	stem: _____
	he/she is coming	lgr.: _____

j	ykvpetv to walk	stem: _____
	he/she is walking	lgr.: _____

Resulting states and intensives: The F- and N-grades

Vocabulary

kerretv to learn, know
(e)yacetv to want
ocetv to have
vcetv to put on (a dress)

hecetv to look at
esetv to catch
põhetv to listen
lekõthē warm

The falling tone grade (f-grade) has the same rules of lengthening as the l-grade, but falling tone (^) appears on the last syllable of the stem:

kerretv to learn
wăkketv to lie down
liketv to sit down
eyacetv to want
ocetv to have
vcetv to put on (a dress)

kêrres he/she knows
wâkkes he/she is lying
likes he/she is sitting
eyâces he/she wants it
ôces he/she has
âcces he/she is wearing (a dress)

We saw that the l-grade indicates ongoing action. Notice how the f-grade changes the meanings of verbs:

kerretv to learn

kêrres he/she is learning it
kêrres he/she knows it

wăkketv to lie down

wakkes he/she is lying down
wâkkes he/she is lying

hecetv to look at

hêces he/she is looking at it
hêces he/she sees it

esetv to catch

êses he/she is catching it
êses he/she is holding it

ocetv to have

oces he/she is having (a baby, a party)
ôces he/she has (a baby)

vcetv to put on (a dress)

acces he/she is putting on (a dress)
âcces he/she is wearing (a dress)

In each case, the f-grade seems to indicate a state. The f-grade is common with only a few verbs: positional verbs (sit, stand, lie), verbs of wearing, and the verbs above. The most common verb in the f-grade is **öwetv** 'to be', though. It occurs in the f-grade after a noun or any stem ending in **-ē**:

öwetv to be

Efv̇t ôs. It's a dog.

Lanēt ôs. It's green.

The nasalizing grade (n-grade) has the same rules of lengthening found in the l-grade, but the last vowel of the stem is nasalized:

wvnvyetv to tie

wvn̄ayes he/she keeps tying it

With verbs, the n-grade means that the action took place over a long period, either because of a long wait or repeated action.

In adjectives, the n-grade is often combined with **-us-** to show greater intensity:

herē good

hērusē beautiful

lekōthē warm

lekōthusē nice and warm

afvckē happy

afackusē very well satisfied

Exercises

1 Listening practice. Your teacher will randomly read an l-grade or f-grade verb. Circle the word you hear:

- | | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| a | likes | l̄ikes |
| b | acces | âcces |
| c | kēres | k̄eres |
| d | ēses | êses |
| e | oces | ôces |
| f | wakkēs | wâkkēs |
| g | hēces | h̄eces |

2 Complete the following:

Ex.	esetv to catch	stem: <u>es-</u>
		fgr.: <u>ês-</u>
	he/she is holding it	<u>êses</u>

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------|
| a | hectv to look at | stem: _____ |
| | he/she sees it | fgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |
| b | vcctv to put on (a robe) | stem: _____ |
| | he/she is wearing it | fgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |
| c | pöhetv to listen | stem: _____ |
| | he/she hears it | fgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |
| d | liketv to sit down | stem: _____ |
| | he/she is sitting | fgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |
| e | kerretv to learn | stem: _____ |
| | he/she knows | fgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |

The H-grade

Vocabulary

nesetv to buy
wiyetv to sell
ōmīyetv to swim
ōssetv to go out
fekhōnnetv to stop

lentappetv to trip
vretv to go about
pvcēssetv to veer
ōsketv to rain
mēcetv to do

The h-grade is used for several different things. One common use is to indicate Past 1 (an even occurring between last night to today). The h-grade seems difficult at first, but can be broken down into several rules:

- a. If a verb stem ends in a single consonant, add **-h-** before that consonant:

nōcetv to sleep
nesetv to buy
wiyetv to sell
ōmīyetv to swim

nōhces he/she went to sleep
nehses he/she bought it
wihyes he/she sold it
ōmihyes he/she swam

If the preceding vowel is long, it gets shortened:

fēketv to buy

fehkes he/she bought it

When **-h-** is inserted after **v**, the **v** is spelled **ă**. (It's still short, it just has a little more of the quality of **a** in this position.)

vyetv to go

ăhyes he/she went

- b. When a verb stem ends in two consonants, it's hard to add an **-h-** in front of them, so there are two ways around that:

- i. If the stem ends in two different consonants or **kk**, insert **-î-** between them:

hōmpetv to eat
letketv to run
tasketv to jump

hōmîpes he/she ate
letîkes he/she ran
tasîkes he/she jumped

tvmketv to fly
wohketv to bark
wăkketv to lie

tvmîkes it flew
wohîkes it barked
wăkîkes he/she lay down

ii. If the stem ends in any other double consonant, drop one and add **-îy-**:

össetv to go out
fekhönnnetv to stop
lentappetv to trip
kerretv to learn, know

ösîyes he/she went out
fekhönîyes he/she stopped
lentapîyes he/she tripped
kerîyes he/she found out

Exercises

1 Complete the following:

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|------------------|
| Ex. | esetv to catch | stem: <u>es-</u> |
| | he/she caught it | hr.: <u>ehs-</u> |
| | | <u>ehses</u> |
| a | hecetv to look at | stem: _____ |
| | he/she sees it | hgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |
| b | vpoketv to sit (of 3+) | stem: _____ |
| | they sat down | hgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |
| c | ykvpetv to walk | stem: _____ |
| | he/she walked | hgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |
| d | fēketv to pay | stem: _____ |
| | he/she paid | hgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |
| e | pvcēssetv to veer | stem: _____ |
| | he/she veered | hgr.: _____ |
| | | _____ |

Nēsis 'I'm buying'

Vocabulary

ăkköpvetv to play
ăkhöttetv to shut, close
höpöyetv to look for
hvkihketv to cry
hvmah! listen!

eccetv to shoot
huehketv to call, holler
nvfketv to hit
(ö)punvyetv to talk, speak

The person doing the action is marked on the verb in Creek:

nesetv to buy

stem: **nes-**, lgr. **nēs-**
nēsis I am buying
nēsetskes you are buying
nēses he/she is buying
nēsēs we are buying
nēsatskes y'all are buying

hecetv to look at

stem: **hec-**, fgr. **hêc-**
hêcis I see it
hêcetskes you see it
hêces he/she sees it
hêcēs we see it
hêcatskes y'all see it

Exercises

1 Memorize the forms for 'see'. Take turns reciting them in class.

2 Complete the following:

a vtōtketv to work stem: _____, lgr. _____
I am working _____
you are working _____
he/she is working _____
we are working _____
y'all are working _____

b hōmpetv to eat stem: _____, lgr. _____
I am eating _____
you are eating _____

he/she is eating
we are eating
y'all are eating

c

eskety to drink
I am drinking
you are drinking
he/she is drinking
we are drinking
y'all are drinking

stem: _____, lgr. _____

Nēset owis 'I am buying'

Vocabulary

takketv to kick
vkerricetv to think about
nōricetv to cook ...
kicetv to say to (someone)

maketv to say (no audience)
vpeletv to laugh
vtōtetv to send

In Creek, there's a short way and a long way to make a sentence. In the long way, the auxiliary verb 'be' is used. The main verb appears in a Non-Final form (ending in **-et**):

letketv to run

Lētkes. He/She is running.
Lētket os. He/She is running.

vyetv to go

Ayes. He/She is going.
Ayet os. He/She is going.

The long way seems a lot more common than the short way. Notice that the auxiliary is **os** here rather than **ōs**. **ōs** is used after noun phrases and adjectives.

In the long pattern, the verb 'be' may be marked for person:

nesetv to buy

Nēset owis. I am buying.
Nēset ōntskes. You are buying.
Nēset os. He/She is buying.
Nēset owēs. We are buying.
Nēset owatskes. Y'all are buying.

Exercises

Overview of the sentence

Vocabulary

hvmken one
hökkôlen two
tuccênen three

ôsten four
căhkêpen five
assēcetv to chase

A verb is a complete sentence in Creek:

Oskes.

It's raining.

Other types of sentences use a slightly different pattern. A sentence like 'A dog is chasing a cat' has the following order in Creek:

<u>Noun phrase -t</u>	<u>Noun phrase -n</u>	<u>Verb</u>
Efv	posen	assēcēs.
dog-T	cat-N	is chasing
'A dog is chasing a cat.'		

Notice that the subject noun phrase comes first and ends in **-t**, while the object noun phrase ends in **-n**. The main difference between 'be' sentences and sentences with other verbs is in the use of the **-t/-t** pattern or the **-t/-n** pattern. Of course, not all sentences have subjects and objects.

Time adverbs ('right now', 'yesterday', etc.) generally come first:

Hiyowat	efvt	posen	assēcēs.
now	dog-T	cat-N	is chasing
'Right now a dog is chasing a cat.'			

A noun phrase may include a demonstrative (**heyv** 'this', **mv** 'that'), a noun, and an adjective (**lvstē** 'black'):

Efv	lvstēt	pose	lanēn	assēcēs.
dog	black-T	cat	yellow-N	is chasing
'A black dog is chasing a yellow cat.'				

Numerals (**hvmken** 'one', etc.) may occur after adjectives. As part of the subject noun phrase, they end in **-t**; as part of the object noun phrase, they end in **-n**:

Efv lvstē hvnket pose lanē hōkkōlen assēces.
dog black one-T cat yellow two-N is chasing
'One black dog is chasing two yellow cats.'

Exercises

Efv hvmken hêcis 'I see one dog': Numbers

Vocabulary

ēpâken six
kôlvpâken seven
cenvpâken eight
ôstvpâken nine
palen ten
tôknawv money, dollar

hōpōrrenkv, hōpōrrenkuce cent,
penny
kvlăksuce nickel
nvrkvpuce dime
kvnsatkv quarter

The Creek numbers from 1 to 10 are easier to remember if you arrange them five by five:

1 **hvmken**
2 **hōkkôlen**
3 **tuccênen**
4 **ôsten**
5 **căhkêpen**

6 **ēpâken**
7 **kôlvpâken**
8 **cenvpâken**
9 **ôstvpâken**
10 **palen**

It helps to know that **vpaken** means 'added'. Six comes from 'added to itself', seven comes from 'two added', etc. No Creek speaker would ever take the numbers apart this way, but it helps those who are learning the language as adults.

When used in counting or as part of an object, numbers end in **-n**. As part of the subject, a number ends in **-t**. Within a noun phrase, the order is Noun - Adjective(s) - Numeral:

Efv lvstē hvmket pose lanē hōkkôlen assêces.
dog black one-T cat yellow two-N is chasing
'One black dog is chasing two yellow cats.'

Ōh-ōnvkv

Hvmah!
Nâket ôwa?
Răkkô te?
Mōnks. Nōkôset ôs.
Letkvs!
Letkêpis!

| I am running!

Exercises

1 Write out your phone number in Creek.

2 Write out the following in words:

1¢	_____	
3¢	_____	
5¢	_____	or _____
6¢	_____	
10¢	_____	or _____
25¢	_____	
\$1	_____	
\$5	_____	
\$10	_____	

Cettōt wâkkes cē! 'There's a snake!': Expressing existence

Vocabulary

ayō hawk
cesse mouse
cettō snake
cufe rabbit
ecō deer
erō squirrel
fuswv bird
kōnō skunk

kōwăkkuce bobcat
lōcv turtle
nōkōse bear
rvrō fish
sōkhv-hatkv opossum
wotkō raccoon
yvhv wolf
yvnvsv buffalo

Existence in Creek is often expressed by using the verbs **liketv** 'to sit', **hueretv** 'to stand', or **wăkketv** 'to lie' in the f-grade:

Cettot wâkkes cē!
snake-T is lying (Fgr)
There's a snake!

The above sentence is literally "A snake is lying!", but the most natural translation in English is 'There's a snake!'. The **cē** on the end of the sentence is an expressive particle used for strong statements or commands.

Humans and many animals may sit, stand, or lie. Some inanimate objects sit, others stand, and other lie. Things that are long tend to lie, things that are tall usually stand, and things that are squat generally sit:

Custaket îkes. There's an egg.

When something is alive and moving about, it's more natural to use **vretv** 'to go about' in the l-grade:

Cesset ares cē! There's a mouse!

Another way to express existence is with the verb **ocetv** 'to exist, have' or the adjective **sepeko** 'absent':

Kvco ôces. There are berries.
Kvco sepekot ôs. There are no berries.

Exercises

1 Find the animals!

a l c e s s e p
e ō e a y ō n y
f c t f k ō n v
v v t o u l o n
e r ō k e s m v
c u f e u i w s
ō r v r v r ō v
m n ō k ō s e t

2 Use the nouns below to express existence:

Ex. ecō Ecōt ares.

a yōpo-lōwake (elephant)

b wakv

c pōkkō

d kafe (coffee)
